
Fwd: Mask Mandate

dhoffman10@verizon.net DEBBIE HOFFMAN
To: stralejd@lcps.k12.va.us

Thursday, January 20, 2022 at 9:08:00 PM Eastern Standard Time

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: Debbie Hoffman <hoffmada@lcps.k12.va.us>
Date: January 20, 2022 at 8:56:13 PM EST
To: dhoffman10@verizon.net
Subject: Fwd: Mask Mandate

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Michelle Grove <michellegrove427@gmail.com>
Date: Thu, Jan 20, 2022 at 8:48 PM
Subject: Mask Mandate
To: Michelle Grove <michellegrove427@gmail.com>
CC: <hoffmada@lcps.k12.va.us>

My apologies for a secondary email. I cannot find the language in SB 1303 which requires the mask mandate. It says to follow CDC guidelines, the guidelines recommended children wear masks, not require.

Also, VA law advises of parental rights. Parental rights will certainly be infringed upon after the EO is supposed to go into place.

Sent from my iPhone

> On Jan 20, 2022, at 8:25 PM, Michelle Grove <michellegrove427@gmail.com> wrote:

>

> Good Evening,

>

> It is my understanding the Governors EO goes into effect on 24 Jan regarding parent choice for masking. I did receive the superintendents video regarding the continuance of the mask mandate. I would like the know if there will be a school board meeting prior to the 24th. In addition all executives orders prior have been followed, why are we not following this order? While there may be conflicting information between the EO and the "law", I believe we should uphold this EO as all others were previously.

>

> I appreciate your time.

>

> /r

> Michelle Grove

>

> Sent from my iPhone

Attachments:

image0.png 281k

ICYMI | Governor Youngkin in The Washington Post: Virginia's parents can decide what's best for their children

press@governor.virginia.gov Press, Governor Youngkin
To: press@governor.virginia.gov
To: stralejd@lcps.k12.va.us

Wednesday, January 26, 2022 at 10:55:52 AM Eastern Standard Time



Commonwealth of Virginia
Office of Governor Glenn Youngkin

Glenn Youngkin: Virginia's parents can decide what's best for their children



Opinion: Glenn Youngkin: Virginia's parents can decide what's best for their children



Read the full op-ed in The Washington Post [here](#) or below.

In November's election, Virginians came together to declare that too many local leaders were failing a generation of schoolchildren. Students deprived of

a quality education, teachers who are underpaid and overworked, and parents deserving a voice in their children's schooling fueled a movement to end the government's one-size-fits-all approach.

The will of Virginians was clear: Parents should have a say in education. Virginia's laws reinforce parents' fundamental rights to make decisions with regards to their child's upbringing and care. As governor, it is my duty to protect the health and welfare of Virginians. My predecessor issued executive orders at the beginning of the pandemic to accomplish what he viewed as his responsibility. Almost two years later, it is time to adjust our approach to the coronavirus emergency, while considering vaccinations, natural immunity, and the adverse mental and physical health effects on children. A path through the end of this pandemic is possible while also respecting individual freedom and choice. We can keep kids in school, provide a parental opt out to mask mandates, and protect lives and livelihoods.

On Day 1 of my administration, I signed an executive order that delivered on a promise I made to parents, empowering them to make decisions regarding their children. While some are seeking to sow division between masking factions, I want to be clear: My executive order ensures that parents can opt out their kids from a school's mask mandate. It bans neither the wearing of masks nor the issuing of mask mandates. Parents can now choose whether wearing a mask at school is right for their child. There is no one better to determine what is best for children, especially after two years of a pandemic, than their parents. And only they should be able to decide whether wearing a mask in school is the right choice for their children.

Virginians know that the practice of silencing parents, the era of divisive partisan politics and the time for statewide mandates are over. The long-term effects of the coronavirus on our youngest generation cannot be ignored. While some children have endured the pandemic adequately, that is not the case for all children. Too many fell behind because classrooms were locked down for too long. Students have been under tremendous stress, and symptoms of anxiety and depression have doubled.

For the sake of our future generations, we need to recognize the potentially damaging impacts of mask-wearing on some children. Experts suggest masks can hide visual cues, hinder emotion recognition and reduce students' abilities to hear teachers clearly. Studies also indicate that masks worn in public settings, school or day care might impact a range of early developmental and processing skills.

If November's election made one thing clear, it's that too many bureaucrats and politicians had stopped listening to parents. Those parents shared with me the concern that the cold halls of government are disconnected from the reality they face every day. Allowing parents to decide whether their children wear masks reflects that reality.

Virginia's parents have had enough with the government dictating how they should raise their children. On the campaign trail, I listened to parents and, as governor, I will continue to listen. School boards throughout the

Commonwealth should do the same. To parents, I say: We respect you. And we will continue to work to empower you in the education and well-being of your children.

Glenn Youngkin, a Republican, is governor of Virginia.

Office of the Governor, Commonwealth of Virginia | P.O. Box 1475, Richmond, VA 23218

Unsubscribe stralejd@lcps.k12.va.us

Constant Contact Data Notice

Sent by press@governor.virginia.gov

Re: Tonight's vote

strickgv@lcps.k12.va.us Gregory Strickland

Friday, January 28, 2022 at 9:03:12 AM Eastern Standard Time

To: dcomer7@gmail.com Donna Comer

Cc: stralejd@lcps.k12.va.us Doug Straley, fisherba@lcps.k12.va.us fisherba@lcps.k12.va.us, goodmafb@lcps.k12.va.us, harrissc@lcps.k12.va.us, hoffmada@lcps.k12.va.us, proffigo@lcps.k12.va.us, seaywa@lcps.k12.va.us, shiffst@lcps.k12.va.us

Ms Comer,

Thank you for your comments. The only change we made last night was to make masks optional for students in school buildings. We did not, as other school divisions have done, make masks optional for everyone. The Governor's executive order only applies to students.

Parents and visitors, as well as faculty and staff still must wear masks when at school. Students must continue to wear masks while on school buses.

Additionally we will continue all other mitigation strategies to do all that we can to ensure the safety of all children.

Thank you again for your comments.

Greg Strickland

On Thu, Jan 27, 2022 at 11:01 PM Donna Comer <dcomer7@gmail.com> wrote:

What an irresponsible decision you all made tonight. We are literally at an all time high in this pandemic. Not all children inside school buildings are even eligible for vaccines yet. Do you even care for your school staff? Why would anyone want to jeopardize our children, other people's children, our teachers, etc. My child's mask protects other children, other children's mask protects mine. You couldn't wait to vote till after the VA Supreme Court made their ruling?

What are you plans to keep my child safe in your school buildings now? What time have you given the schools to come off with new plans to keep everyone safe? You are now allowing visitors and other parents access to MY child without wearing a mask. You expect my child to sit all day beside a unmask person? Where is my right to choose for my child!!! Where is my child's right to learn in a safe environment?

Highly disappointed in you lack of commitment to keeping ALL child safe,
Donna C.

dcomer7@gmail.com Donna Comer

Friday, January 28, 2022 at 11:18:24 AM Eastern Standard Time

To: strickgv@lcps.k12.va.us Gregory Strickland

Cc: stralejd@lcps.k12.va.us Doug Straley, fisherba@lcps.k12.va.us, goodmafb@lcps.k12.va.us, harrissc@lcps.k12.va.us, hoffmada@lcps.k12.va.us, proffigo@lcps.k12.va.us, seaywa@lcps.k12.va.us, shiffst@lcps.k12.va.us

Respectfully Mr. Strickland, I had hoped Louisa school board would have been true leaders and set an example. My child has missed out on so much doing her part to keep others safe. She deserves better!!! She deserves her right to a safe education, inside a safe environment, along with her peers.

As for the governors order, the VA court systems haven't even ruled if his order is enforceable or in conflict with federal law. All you had to do is gather information last night and wait on the courts to rule. My children by law are required to be in safety seats every time they are in an automobile. My parental rights are not being violated having a mask mandate is no different than seat belt law it's the best for the safety of all children.

I do appreciate your clarification that visitors and parents still have to wear mask while in building. You assure me that all the other safety measures will remain in place. What you are failing to acknowledge is those safety measures were designed around the fact that ALL children would be masked. So again, I ask you how as a parent are you ensuring my children is going to be able attend school safely? I also wonder was ANY consideration taken when choosing the effective date of the boards decision? Our children's safety had NOTHING to do with your decision last night... You gave Mr.Straley a weekend to make sure all things that need to be addressed and rolled out happen. I have NO doubt he will do everything in his power to make it happen, however you could have supported him better.

I appreciate ALL of the effort Mr. Straley has put into keeping not only my child but all the children and staff as safe as possible. It's clear that he truly has their best interests in mind when making decisions. I wish I had the same trust that the board's interests are for everyones safety.

Donna C

On Fri, Jan 28, 2022, 9:04 AM Gregory Strickland <strickgv@lcps.k12.va.us> wrote:
Ms Comer,

Thank you for your comments. The only change we made last night was to make masks optional for students in school buildings. We did not, as other school divisions have done, make masks optional for everyone. The Governor's executive order only applies to students.

Parents and visitors, as well as faculty and staff still must wear masks when at school. Students must continue to wear masks while on school buses.

Additionally we will continue all other mitigation strategies to do all that we can to ensure the safety of all children.

Thank you again for your comments.

Greg Strickland

On Thu, Jan 27, 2022 at 11:01 PM Donna Comer <dcomer7@gmail.com> wrote:

What an irresponsible decision you all made tonight. We are literally at an all time high in this pandemic. Not all children inside school buildings are even eligible for vaccines yet. Do you even care for your school staff? Why would anyone want to jeopardize our children, other people's children, our teachers, etc. My child's mask protects other children, other children's mask protects mine. You couldn't wait to vote till after the VA Supreme Court made their ruling?

What are your plans to keep my child safe in your school buildings now? What time have you given the schools to come off with new plans to keep everyone safe? You are now allowing visitors and other parents access to MY child without wearing a mask. You expect my child to sit all day beside a unmask person? Where is my right to choose for my child!!! Where is my child's right to learn in a safe environment?

Highly disappointed in you lack of commitment to keeping ALL child safe,
Donna C.

Questions/Answers from 24 Jan Supts Call

john.hendron@doe.virginia.gov Hendron, John
Bcc: stralejd@lcps.k12.va.us

Thursday, February 3, 2022 at 2:01:11 PM Eastern Standard Time

Good afternoon,

Included below are the questions we collected on 24 January on our call with VDH and the Secretary of Education's office. Thank you for your patience as we collated the answers to these questions.

On January 24, the Virginia Department of Education hosted a webinar with division superintendents and local health directors. Education Secretary Guidera, State Superintendent Balow, and Acting Commissioner Greene made opening comments. Dr. Forlano, Deputy Director, Office of Epidemiology, reviewed [guidance toward the prevention of COVID-19 in school settings](#) published on January 21, 2022. Questions and responses are below. As a reminder, neither state agencies, nor the Office of the Attorney General, provides legal advice.

Masking in Schools

What is the VDH recommendation regarding masking in schools? Is VDH no longer recommending universal masking in schools?

Executive Order 2 allows parents to decide if their child will wear a mask at school. Specifically, it states that parents of any child enrolled in an elementary or secondary school or a school-based early childcare and educational program may elect for their children not to be subject to any mask mandate in effect at the child's school or educational program.

While parents and families can choose for their child to not wear a mask at school, VDH recommends:

- All persons aged two and older, regardless of vaccination status, wear masks indoors in public settings when [community level of transmission is substantial or high](#).
- People who are not [up to date on COVID-19 vaccines](#) are recommended to wear a mask indoors in public settings regardless of the level of community transmission.
- People wear a mask when they return to school on days 6-10 following a 5-day isolation or quarantine period
- People who are exposed but do not have to quarantine (e.g., students who are up-to-date or if aged 12-17 and completed the primary series) wear a mask for 10 days
- [Schools review the DOLI standard](#) for any applicable mask requirements for teachers and staff
- Individuals who cannot wear a mask complete the 10-day isolation or quarantine period at home if feasible.

Do masks work against the spread of Omicron?

[CDC offers guidance on how to use masks](#) to slow the spread of COVID-19 and states that masks offer some protection against all variants. Respirators (specialized filtering masks such as N95s) do have better filtration, and if worn properly the whole time, can provide a higher level of protection than a cloth or procedural mask. Respirators are generally recommended for adults, and

have not been tested for broad use among children. More information about the Omicron variant, its transmission, and the degree of protection provided by masks continues to emerge. VDH will continue to review the evidence for mask use and update guidance accordingly.

If not all persons in a school are masking, won't this potentially result in more students and staff being identified as close contacts?

It is possible. The definition of close contact and expectations pertaining to K-12 schools [can be found online](#). Application of this close contact definition in an environment where all persons in K-12 schools are not masking may result in additional students or staff being identified as close contacts.

If masks are optional, are masked students in a class with an unmasked student (positive) considered to be close contacts if they were within 3-6 feet of the positive student for more than 15 minutes? And would the recommendation be to quarantine the entire class?

Yes to the first question. We recommend [reviewing the definition of close contact and exceptions](#) pertaining to K-12 schools. Quarantining an entire class would only be recommended if there were reason to believe the entire class had been exposed. Schools should consult their local health department on appropriate actions to take when outbreaks or clusters of COVID-19 occur in schools.

Are masks still required on school buses?

Yes. Per a federal order, [masks are required when using public transportation](#), which includes school buses.

Is EO 2 applicable to all after-school programs (sports, performing arts, etc.) or just the time during which in-person instruction is being offered?

Directive 2 of EO2 states that "The parents of any child enrolled in a[n] elementary or secondary school or a school based early childcare and educational program may elect for their children not to be subject to any mask mandate in effect at the child's school or educational program." (emphasis added) The plain language of EO2 is broad enough to encompass after school programs.

Should school leaders follow SB1303 or EO2? And until a court gives that answer, it is not going to be resolved. Can you let us know when the courts will decide?

We will let you know when the courts decide. It is the position of the Governor that EO2 and SB1303 are consistent. SB1303 requires in-person instruction to be provided in a manner that adheres, to the maximum extent practicable, to the CDC's recommended mitigation strategies to reduce transmission of COVID-19 in schools. SB1303 does not require absolute adherence to all of the CDC's recommendations but instead requires in-person instruction to be provided in a manner that adheres to the CDC's recommended mitigation strategies that are practicable. Universal and correct masking, as recommended by the CDC, has been shown to be impractical. Superintendents should be advised to consult their own attorneys.

How do division superintendents navigate both SB 1303 and E02?

We will let you know when the courts decide. It is the position of the Governor that EO2 and SB1303 are consistent. SB1303 requires in-person instruction to be provided in a manner that

adheres, to the maximum extent practicable, to the CDC's recommended mitigation strategies to reduce transmission of COVID-19 in schools. SB1303 does not require absolute adherence to all of the CDC's recommendations but instead requires in-person instruction to be provided in a manner that adheres to the CDC's recommended mitigation strategies that are practicable. Universal and correct masking, as recommended by the CDC, has been shown to be impractical. Superintendents should be advised to consult their own attorneys.

Please help division superintendents understand the relationship between EO2 and SB1303. We need your guidance on this perceived conflict.

We will let you know when the courts decide. It is the position of the Governor that EO2 and SB1303 are consistent. SB1303 requires in-person instruction to be provided in a manner that adheres, to the maximum extent practicable, to the CDC's recommended mitigation strategies to reduce transmission of COVID-19 in schools. SB1303 does not require absolute adherence to all of the CDC's recommendations but instead requires in-person instruction to be provided in a manner that adheres to the CDC's recommended mitigation strategies that are practicable. Universal and correct masking, as recommended by the CDC, has been shown to be impractical. Superintendents should be advised to consult their own attorneys.

What should a superintendent do when a school board has voted to retain a mask mandate?

The superintendent should consult with the school attorney. Parents may seek judicial review of school board decisions under *Virginia Code* § 22.1-87. This statute provides that:

“Any parent, custodian, or legal guardian of a pupil attending the public schools in a school division who is aggrieved by an action of the school board may, within thirty days after such action, petition the circuit court having jurisdiction in the school division to review the action of the school board. Such review shall proceed upon the petition, the minutes of the meeting at which the school board's action was taken, the orders, if any, of the school board, an attested copy of the transcript, if any, of any hearing before the school board, and any other evidence found relevant to the issues on appeal by the court. The action of the school board shall be sustained unless the school board exceeded its authority, acted arbitrarily or capriciously, or abused its discretion.”

Case Investigation and Contact Tracing

Why is VDH changing its approach to case investigation and contact tracing in the general community, including in schools?

A number of scientific and other factors reduce the utility and feasibility of universal case investigation and contact tracing for each COVID-19 case at this time. These factors include:

1. The large number of asymptomatic and less severe cases due to changes in the virus and widespread vaccination in the U.S.
2. Many infections are never identified by public health agencies because persons with asymptomatic or mild cases may not get tested, as well as the increasing use of “over the counter” at-home tests, which are generally not reported to public health agencies
3. The highest risk of transmission to others occurring prior to symptom onset and during the first few days of symptomatic illness (or immediately after first testing positive for those who

remain asymptomatic)

4. The shorter incubation period of the Omicron variant. Consequently, only a very small portion of total cases and close contacts are being reached by public health contact tracers in time to prevent onward transmission.

Can schools require students to wear a mask to return to school on days 6 through 10 after their recommended 5-day quarantine period? (Same question for those students who have isolated at home for a positive test, regardless of symptoms).

If a child has tested positive, the parents have a choice to either send their child to school wearing a mask on days 6-10 or to continue isolation on days 6-10.

If a child is unvaccinated for COVID-19 or not up to date on the COVID-19 vaccine series and has had a known exposure to COVID-19, the parent can choose for the child to participate in the Test to Stay program, if available, or to quarantine at home. If the parent chooses for the child to participate in the Test to Stay program, then the parent agrees to the student wearing a mask for 10 days after the exposure. The [consent form is clear on this expectation](#). So if the parent consents for their student to participate in the Test to Stay program, the school can require the student to wear a mask for 10 days following exposure to stay in school. If the parent does not consent to the Test to Stay program or the program is unavailable, the child should quarantine at home for 5 days and may return to school on day 6. The parent has a choice to either send the child to school wearing a mask on days 6-10 or to continue to quarantine at home on days 6-10.

If school officials become aware of a case of COVID-19 in a member of their school community, does VDH recommend or expect that schools notify public health of every case?

In light of these changes, generally speaking, VDH no longer expects schools to report every case of COVID-19 to their local health department. However, in consultation with their local health department, schools may continue to do so if desired and capacity allows.

Schools should continue to report suspected outbreaks to public health and situations where the school has identified multiple cases comprising at least 10% of students, teachers, or staff within a specified group (e.g., 10% in a grade, among teachers, or school-wide, etc.). Public health epidemiologists in local health departments can assist with determining if there is an outbreak and/or if there is in-school transmission.

When school officials become aware of a student, teacher or staff person with COVID-19, does VDH recommend or expect that schools will identify the school-associated close contacts of that person?

Schools are no longer expected to conduct contact tracing on every individual case of COVID-19. However, contact tracing remains one component of the layered prevention strategies approach and should be continued in partnership with local health departments when there are outbreaks and sustained transmission within schools. Regardless of the level of contact tracing at a school for COVID-19, schools should notify parents and families of a case of COVID-19 when a member of the school community becomes known to them.

What is the definition of a COVID-19 outbreak in school?

A COVID-19 outbreak is one in which 3 cases have onset of illness (or if asymptomatic, positive specimen collection date) within a 14-day period, and are epidemiologically-linked (associated in person, place and time) without another more likely source of exposure (e.g., household of close contact to a confirmed case outside of the school setting).

Schools should also report identification of multiple cases comprising greater than 10% of a group/population without well-defined epi-links (e.g., in a grade, among teachers, school-wide, etc).

Who is the responsible party for making the decision regarding closure of classrooms when outbreaks occur? Is this a local public health decision or a decision of the local education agency?

This is a decision for the school and its school board.

When does VDH recommend isolation for students, teachers and staff for COVID-19?

VDH recommends that people who have tested positive for COVID-19, regardless of symptoms, should isolate for at least 5 days for COVID-19. For more information on when it is safe to release from isolation, [please refer to this infographic](#). A helpful flowchart [intended for K-12 parents](#) is also available.

When does VDH recommend quarantine for students and staff for COVID-19?

Generally speaking, anyone not up-to-date on COVID-19 vaccinations who learns they have had close contact with someone with COVID-19 is recommended to quarantine at home for 5 days and [follow other public health advice](#). For more information on when it is safe to release from isolation, please [refer to this infographic](#). The VDH also developed a [flowchart intended for K-12 parents](#). VDH may also recommend strong adherence to quarantine recommendations in situations of sustained outbreaks or ongoing transmission within schools. People who have recently recorded a positive test within 90 days do not need to quarantine.

If students, teachers and staff report testing positive for COVID-19, what should schools do with this information?

When cases are identified in a student, teacher or staff person and are known to school officials, VDH recommends that schools exclude these people from the school environment according to public health recommendations for isolation. In addition, schools should continue to communicate isolation and quarantine recommendations to the school community so that students, teachers and staff are aware of recommended practices. Schools are also important partners in educating parents, teachers and staff about actions to take if they are exposed such as testing, monitoring for symptoms, self-reporting illness, and staying home if they are sick. Some school communities may expect higher levels of contact tracing than others.

If students, teachers and staff report being a close contact of a COVID-19 case, what should schools do with this information?

Schools may not always be aware of which persons in their school community are recommended to quarantine at any given time. When close contacts who are recommended to quarantine are identified in a student, teacher or staff person and are known to school officials, VDH recommends

that schools consider excluding these people from the school environment according to public health recommendations for quarantine. VDH acknowledges that quarantine may not always be practicable for all people. An alternative to traditional quarantine is Test to Stay.

Schools are also important partners in educating parents, teachers and staff about actions to take if they are exposed such as testing, monitoring for symptoms, self-reporting illness, and staying home if they are sick. Some school communities may expect higher levels of contact tracing than others.

Are school officials required to exclude children who are known to be close contacts from school? What entity has the authority to make the decision whether a student should stay home from school?

VDH provides [recommendations for quarantine and isolation](#). The State Health Commissioner has the authority to order isolation or quarantine in certain circumstances. In the vast majority of situations, people cooperate with public health and voluntarily isolate and quarantine. The decision to order isolation or quarantine is taken very seriously and is only invoked when absolutely necessary.

Schools have the authority to direct a student to stay home from school due to illness or exposure to COVID-19 as per school policy, and should consider CDC and VDH recommendations on isolation or quarantine when making these decisions, as they do for other communicable diseases.

Why do students who are fully vaccinated not need to quarantine and can stay in school? Can't vaccinated persons also contract and transmit COVID-19 to others?

Yes, but their risk is much lower than for unvaccinated persons. People who are up-to-date on their COVID-19 vaccines by getting all recommended doses, including booster doses if eligible, have the highest level of protection against COVID-19 from Omicron. Early studies from other countries suggest reduced effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccination against symptomatic Omicron infection, but moderate to high protection in people following a booster dose. A [CDC study found that during the emergence of the Omicron variant adults who were unvaccinated had 5 times the risk of infection](#) compared to adults who were fully vaccinated and boosted and 3 times the risk of infection compared to adults who were fully vaccinated with no booster dose. Additionally, a [study of transmission \(or spread\) of the virus in Danish households](#) found that people who were fully vaccinated and boosted generally had reduced transmissibility. Comparatively, unvaccinated people had higher transmissibility than those fully vaccinated but not boosted. Given the increased protection against Omicron infection and the reduced transmissibility following a booster dose, those who have received a booster dose are at lower risk of SARS-CoV-2 infection and at lower risk of spreading to others after coming into close contact with someone with COVID-19.

In summary, vaccination decreases the chance that an individual will become infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 and further transmit the virus to others. However, booster doses are needed to provide higher vaccine effectiveness against the Omicron variant. Unvaccinated individuals remain the most vulnerable to COVID-19 infections.

VDH recommends that everyone stay up-to-date with COVID-19 vaccinations.

- Children ages 5-11 years who have completed their primary series are up-to-date.

- Students ages 12-17 years old who completed their primary series but have not yet received all eligible boosters can forgo quarantine at this point in time, to allow time for them to catch up on booster doses. These students are advised to continue to monitor symptoms and take other precautions such as masking for the 10 days following known exposure.

Who is the responsible party for decision making regarding closure of classrooms when outbreaks occur? Is this a local public health decision or decision of the Local Education Agency (LEA)?

The local school district makes the decision, in consultation with local health departments.. During outbreaks with sustained transmission in schools, local health departments can make recommendations on appropriate steps to reduce transmission and prevent further spread. Public health will make recommendations based on the specific risks of an outbreak. Examples of the strategies that may be considered include:

- Notification to parents of cases identified in classrooms
- Maintaining daily or weekly dashboards or reports of total cases identified throughout school as a method of providing school-wide situational awareness on presence of COVID-19.
- Increased messaging that parents may opt for children to wear masks as a strategy to reduce disease transmission. Encouraging mask use among teachers/staff.
- Temporary pause in non-educational activities when it is related to the outbreak (e.g., sports and extracurricular activities)
- Temporary pause in higher risk activities in the school environment (e.g., indoor singing/live performances; large in-person activities, etc) if it is related to the outbreak
- Increased physical distancing and cohorting
- Increased education about hand washing, ventilation, respiratory etiquette, staying at home while ill, etc.
- Decreased nonessential visitors, volunteers, and activities involving external groups or organizations
- Increased testing of students, teachers, and staff
- Cleaning and disinfection to remove potential virus on surfaces, which further reduces any risk of spreading infection.

Should schools and local health departments also consider impacts to local health care systems when making decisions about COVID-19 mitigation measures in schools?

Schools should make decisions based upon the situation in the school, but after consultation with the local health department. Even when the circulating variant of COVID-19 is not causing severe illness in children or adults, variants that are very transmissible such as Omicron can result in large volumes of patients seeking care at hospitals and health care facilities. Considering impacts to health care systems is an important component of decision making related to mitigation strategies. Local health departments monitor hospitalization trends and data on health care capacity and can provide information to school officials to help with decision-making.

Are there any special considerations for classes such as chorus or band?

Activities that increase respiration, such as singing, can generate an increased amount of respiratory droplets and aerosols that may contain the COVID-19 virus if a person is infected.

Schools may wish to consider several prevention strategies such as increased distancing, reminders about masking as prevention, screening testing, cohorting, and moving performances outside where feasible.

Testing

Will the ViSSTA program continue to be offered to schools?

Schools may continue to implement the ViSSTA screening testing program. Screening testing remains an important mitigation strategy to prevent transmission of COVID-19 in schools.

Screening testing can help promptly identify and isolate cases, which then can assist in identifying those who may have been exposed to COVID-19 and are not fully vaccinated so that they can be told that it is recommended they quarantine, and identify clusters or outbreaks of COVID-19 earlier. This can help reduce the risk to students, teachers and staff, and controlling outbreaks before they expand can help limit any disruption to in-person education. Please visit the ViSSTA website for more information, or contact your designated K-12 Testing Coordinator.

The Revised K-12 Interim Guidance emphasizes testing. Are there enough tests available to implement widespread school testing programs?

School divisions participating in ViSSTA and Test to Stay initiatives are receiving support for testing. VDH has provided vendors to conduct PCR screening testing at schools and has also provided supplies of at-home antigen test kits for Test to Stay and/or diagnostic testing for members of the school community who have symptoms or known exposure. Please visit the K12 Testing webpage for more information or contact your assigned K12 Testing Coordinator if you have additional questions.

Do parents have to notify the schools if their child tests positive?

VDH and VDOE expect that parents would adhere to the best practice of keeping their child home from school if their child has signs/symptoms of COVID-19 or has a positive test for COVID-19. Parents should follow local school policy regarding notification to school officials regarding positive tests of students. VDH recommends that persons with a positive test result stay home for the recommended isolation period, follow other public health advice, and notify their close contacts of potential exposure. Staying home from school or work when we are sick is one of the most effective ways to prevent the transmission of COVID-19.

Can schools accept antibody tests in lieu of negative molecular or antigen tests?

Not recommended. The [CDC advises that antibody testing is not a replacement for virologic testing](#) and should not be used to establish the presence or absence of acute SARS-CoV-2 infection. Individuals who test positive by direct viral detection methods for SARS-CoV-2 (such as antigen detection tests) typically do not develop measurable antibodies until 7-14 days after their illness begins.

Antibody testing is not recommended for Test to Stay as it would not provide accurate information on whether the student has an acute infection with SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19), which is necessary to determine if a student needs to immediately isolate at home or can proceed to in-person instruction. VDH recommends

the use and has provided supplies of the eMed Abbott BinaxNOW rapid antigen test kits for schools participating in Test to Stay.

As a reminder, public health does not recommend nor require a test to be released from Isolation.

Test to Stay

Is Test to Stay (TTS) still needed?

Yes. The new guidance and shift to more outbreak focused containment strategies will likely result in fewer school age children being identified as close contacts and therefore fewer children identified as needing to quarantine. When children are identified as needing to quarantine (e.g. as part of an outbreak investigation), Test to Stay is a helpful strategy to keep kids in school during their 5 day recommended quarantine period.

Many schools already implement screening testing programs through the ViSSTA program, and have supplies for diagnostic testing for those persons who present with signs/symptoms of illness or are close contacts of an individual with COVID-19.

Schools may utilize testing programs to meet their needs, which may be more generalized testing for the school population, or more focused testing targeted to classrooms, grades, or other groups where an increase in cases or an outbreak is suspected. VDH encourages the use of screening and diagnostic testing as a tool to mitigate new introductions into schools.

If interested, can schools still enroll in the Test to Stay program?

Yes. VDH continues to support interested schools in implementing Test to Stay. School divisions can still send in their attestation forms. School divisions interested in [Test to Stay](#) can contact test2stay@vdh.virginia.gov with any questions and visit the [VDH Test to Stay Website](#) for more information.

Must a school division have a universal masking mandate to participate in Test to Stay?

No. A parent has the choice of whether or not their student participates in the Test to Stay program. If a parent consents to the student's participation in the program, then the parent agrees to the student wearing a mask at all times (except for when eating and drinking) for 10 days after the exposure. The [consent form is clear on this expectation](#).

If the parent consents for their student to participate in the test to stay program, then *the school can require the student to wear a mask for 10 days following exposure to stay in school*. If the student does not wear a mask, then the alternative is to quarantine. This is in line with the [new flow chart](#). Schools implementing Test to Stay should consider privacy and confidentiality concerns for students participating in Test to Stay in light of any other school masking policies.

Department of Labor and Industry (DOLI)

Does the Virginia Department of Labor and Industry (DOLI) Emergency Temporary Standard require employees to wear masks when COVID-19 rates are high? And does this include

teachers?

The Virginia DOLI Standard states that employers shall provide and require employees that are not fully vaccinated, fully vaccinated employees in areas of substantial or high community transmission, and otherwise at-risk employees (because of a prior transplant or other medical condition) [to wear face coverings or surgical masks while indoors, unless their work task requires a respirator or other PPE](#). Exceptions are provided in the standard.

In service,

John G. Hendron, Ed.D.

Superintendent's Office

Project Manager of Professional Learning & Organizational Development

Virginia Department of Education

101 N. 14th Street

PO Box 2120

Richmond, VA 23218-2120

email: john.hendron@doe.virginia.gov

web: www.doe.virginia.gov

Fwd:

strickgv@lcps.k12.va.us Gregory Strickland
To: stralejd@lcps.k12.va.us Doug Straley

Thursday, February 3, 2022 at 2:10:37 PM Eastern Standard Time

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **J. Bavetz** <djbavetz@gmail.com>

Date: Tue, Feb 1, 2022 at 2:21 PM

Subject: Fwd:

To: <shiffist@lcps.k12.va.us>, <harrissc@lcps.k12.va.us>, <strickgv@lcps.k12.va.us>

Good afternoon,

I was hoping to not have to send an email to anyone else regarding this issue, but I have yet to hear a response back from Mr. Woody.

It concerns me that yesterday, after I made a Facebook post (complaining about the announcement Mr. Woody made), I got a phone call within 20 minutes of my post from Mr. Woody asking me to call him back. Approximately an hour later I received another call - this time from his cell. Again, an hour later, another call with a voice mail.

Being as I was busy, I was not able to return Mr. Woody's phone call at a reasonable time, and, to be honest, I would rather have a paper trail in this day and time. At 9:32 last night I sent Mr. Woody an email (attached) regarding my concerns for the comments that were made yesterday to the entire school.

As a concerned and very frustrated parent, you would think there would be some type of response from Mr. Woody by now. He was able to call my cell phone 3 separate times yesterday within a few hours. I would have expected a response by now - which is why I am sending this email.

As a former employee of LCPS, I took/take pride in how our kids are talked to and how they are taught. If we all focused a little more on our children and less on pride and politics, our students may feel more supported. This comment/announcement has basically set the tone for the rest of school year in my opinion. Masks were encouraged, now a huge majority of students who want to choose not to wear one, feel awkward and not equal.

Joshua Bavetz
Bavetz Entertainment
9626 Frederickshall Rd
Mineral, Virginia 23117

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **J. Bavetz** <djbavetz@gmail.com>

Date: Mon, Jan 31, 2022 at 9:32 PM

Subject:

To: <woodysme@lcps.k12.va.us>

Mr. Woody,

I received your voice messages - I assume your call was due to the Facebook post that was made earlier today.

When I picked my daughter up, she informed me of an announcement that was made today throughout the school stating that you were "glad that the majority of the students were wearing masks" - paraphrasing of course. She couldn't remember the exact words, just the way it made her and her classmates (without masks) feel.

A large number of students felt as if you were praising the students who wore the masks and making it sound as if the students who chose not to, were in the wrong. A lot of the masked students felt this way too, and chose to boast about it.

Whether you meant to make them feel this way, or not, I feel that if you are speaking to an entire school, you should not alienate one group.

Masks were and still are a huge deal to some people, I understand that. It was our school board that approved the parents choice to send their student with a mask, or not. So when you have other students making jokes, rude comments and picking on each other over a mask...then also having the principal of the school PRAISE only a percentage of the school for wearing masks - can you imagine the anxiety and stress of a 13 year old?

I'm not the only parent that feels this way and she is not the only student that felt this way today. I've heard from numerous other parents of the same story as soon as they picked their child up.

I hope you understand the frustration, as there is already enough negativity in this world, and when it comes to my children - I have to speak up.

I also find it rather disturbing that within 15-20 minutes of me making a Facebook post - I get a phone call - and two more after that from your personal cell. When my daughter was having bullying issues a few years ago and kids were pulling her hair, hitting her on the bus and making inappropriate comments, it took FAR longer to get a response.

Joshua Bavetz
Bavetz Entertainment
9626 Frederickshall Rd
Mineral, Virginia 23117